



ANZAAB Aspects of Book Collecting

Ida Rentoul Outhwaite

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Background: Ida Rentoul Outhwaite's first published work appeared in Australian newspapers and magazines in the very earliest years of the 20th century and her illustrations continued to appear in them until at least 1930. She is one of Australia's best known children's book illustrators and her work is collected eagerly both here and overseas. Her first books, collaborations with her sister Annie, *Mollie's Bunyip* and *Mollie's staircase* were published in 1904 and 1906. Over a period of almost 60 years until 1958 many more books, as well as postcards, calendars, song books, sheet music and ephemera were published. Even after the publication of new works ceased, many reprints followed and there has been a lively market using reproductions of her art work in a wide variety of products including nursery room friezes, postage stamps and even porcelain. Her best works are charming, striking, highly imaginative and expertly executed. Generations of children and adults have taken great joy from them. The most desirable of her works are the rare early printed books and ephemera, the large and handsome books such as *Elves and Fairies* and *Fairyland*, and the original watercolours and pen and ink drawings. The best examples in all these categories are keenly sought and hard to find in good condition. *Elves and Fairies* and *Fairyland*, with their large tipped-in plates, many in colour, are among the most lavish and handsomely produced of all Australian children's books.

Range: The wide range of Ida Rentoul Outhwaite's work offers many options for collecting. One could concentrate on the ephemera, or the song books, or the major illustrated books, or original art work, or a period between say 1903 and 1937, first editions or reprints according to tastes and budget.

Availability: Outhwaite's books have been as susceptible to the love and attention of children as most children's books and as a result finding very good copies of the rarer items and larger books can be difficult. Fine copies are particularly uncommon.

Price-range: Minor works and modern reprints can be bought for under \$100, but the rarer and more handsomely produced books fetch from the low hundreds up to several thousand dollars each and the original art works much more.

Footnote: Marcie Muir and Robert Holden's *The fairy world of Ida Rentoul Outhwaite* is the best reference on her work and contains much useful information and many reproductions of Outhwaite's beautiful illustrations.